TENTH MEETING

OF THE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERALS

HELD IN CONNECTION WITH THE

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE

ERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERALS

TY HOUSE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 6, 1920

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The National Federation of Religious Liberals believes that single handed, no one man can fight the battle for humanity. It believes that no one church, no one denomination or sect is equal to the task.

It *does* believe that united and with one mind, liberal men and women of all churches can face the challenge of the day, and by their union can make a better world.

Can you, alone, win the fight for the ideal?

The National Federation of Religious Liberals was organized in 1908, with a nucleus of liberal religious thinkers and social workers. It has held ten congresses in Philadelphia, New York City, Rochester, N. Y., Oakland, Calif., Pittsburgh, Pa., and Boston, and now counts in its fellowship the official representation of the

American Unitarian Association,

Religious Society of Friends,

Central Conference of American Rabbis,

Universalist General Convention,

Liberal Christian League, London, England,

together with a growing number of members of other churches. Each year its aims enlist other believers in applied Christianity as the solution of the social-religious problems confronting the Nation today.

TENTH MEETING

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NATIONAL FEDERATION

OF

RELIGIOUS LIBERALS

HELD IN CONNECTION WITH THE

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERALS

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY

AT UNITY HOUSE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 6, 1920

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PURPOSE

To promote the religious life by united testimony for sincerity, freedom and progress in religion, by social service, and a fellowship of the spirit beyond the lines of sect and creed.

FOREWORD

A PROGRAM FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Widespread criticism has been aroused by brief extracts which have appeared in the daily press from the address of the president of the National Federation of Religious Liberals at the meeting in Boston, October 6, 1920, the proceedings of which appear in the following pages. With much of this criticism the president is himself in entire accord, and particularly with that well-deserved objection that his address was not "constructive." He would therefore request the privilege of suggesting a "constructive" program, and would ask for a thoughtful consideration of the same. He desires to have it understood that he speaks from the inside as one who believes in the Church, and to himself and his own church as well as to the Church in general.

1. The Church should plant itself squarely across the way leading to general military training, and all preparation for war,—whether in the way of increasing armies or increasing navies. It should show a real faith in the power of the Christ spirit by trusting it and taking the consequences.

2. The Church should take a strong stand against the jingo talk of war with Mexico or Japan. It should make it plain that no Christian man can allow or take part in any such policy, and that the whole force of the Church will be turned against any administration that suggests it.

3. The Church should take a strong ground in combating the growing hostility between capital and labor. As it has more opportunity to deal with capitalists it is the more responsible that they should show a genuine spirit of unselfish brotherhood in approaching questions of wages, hours, etc.; but it should also seek out the laborer and show sympathetic understanding of his problems and difficulties. If this hostility grows to actual conflict we of the Christian Church are to blame.

4. We should take the lead in a nation-wide campaign to give adequate support to the agencies which are fighting disease and starvation in Europe.

5. We should take under our protection the millions of negroes now oppressed, maltreated, and murdered in our midst. We should see that they have adequate schools, opportunity to develop their special powers, and fair play generally.

This is no new proposition, of course. Churches here and there are trying to do their work in all of these lines. But the Church as a whole everlastingly works inwards instead of outwards, acting on the apparent assumption that a church exists for its members; whereas in fact is it not true that a church should be an organization by which its members act on the outside world? I believe that the church could revive, regain its power among the poor, which it certainly has not now, and be a really effective agent in making "the kingdom come," if it would take up such a program as that outlined above.

JESSE H. HOLMES.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE TENTH MEETING

The tenth meeting of the National Federation of Religious Liberals was held at Unity House, Boston, Massachusetts, Wednesday morning, October 6, 1920. The meeting formed a part of the program of the seventh session of the International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals held during the week beginning Sunday, October 3, and commemorating the Pilgrim Tercentenary.

A devotional service was conducted by Rev. Carl G. Horst of Littleton, Mass.

In the absence of President Jesse H. Holmes, the chair was occupied by the secretary of the Federation, Frank H. Burt of Newton, Mass., who welcomed the members and guests in the following address:

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER

In the absence of the president of the Federation it falls to me to welcome you to this its tenth meeting and to say a few words on the outlook for this movement to unite the supporters of liberal religion. I regret that his duties in Swarthmore College prevent my friend Professor Holmes from speaking here, as he would have done with eloquence and earnestness, on behalf of the Liberal Friends. No one is more devoted than he to the liberal faith, and he would have brought home to you the close kinship of the Unitarian and the progressive Quaker.

It is a pleasure to welcome such a group as this, made up of those who in their quest of the truth, approaching it from many angles, have arrived at a common ground. To repeat the words of Whittier,

> "Creed and rite perchance may differ, yet our faith and hope be one."

Some of us who attended the International Congress of 1907 will recall the impressive service in the beautiful Unitarian Church in Fairhaven in this State, built by the late Henry H. Rogers. A story was once told by

Mr. Rogers of a good Scotchwoman, who while an ardent Baptist, had nevertheless a firm faith in the possibility of uniting all churches in one body. "It wad be verra easy," she declared; "You gie a little, an' I gie a little, an' we wad all be Baptists!"

In this Federation we have learned that without any of us being compelled even to "gie a little" we can all be one in spirit. The "Inward Light" of George Fox, the personal communion of the Father with his earthly children, as taught by Channing and Emerson, the faith in the final universal triumph of good as proclaimed by Murray—these are surely the common fundamentals of our faith. And beyond these modern teachers, beyond even their common Master, Jesus, we claim spiritual descent from the age-enduring religion of Israel, whose prophets, known and unknown, were the first of all recorded religious teachers to proclaim the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

The past work of the Federation has been summed up by its founder, Dr. Wendte, in these words: "It has been our aim to contribute something distinctive to the great issues of the time; not merely to voice or echo the prevailing word in church or state." Here we have the keynote of the nine meetings which the Federation has held prior to this time, scattered about the country from Massachusetts to California. Our membership is widely diffused, with a major part in Philadelphia and vicinity, due largely to the active interest on the part of the Liberal Friends. Official recognition is extended the Federation by the General Conference of the Religious Society of Friends, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Universalist General Convention and the American Unitarian Association. Provision is made by the by-laws for direct affiliation of individual churches and societies, although no effort has yet been made to secure such action. The individual membership includes representatives of the Protestant Evangelical, Congregational, Episcopal, Baptist, Spiritualist and other denominations, as well as the Society for Ethical Culture.

It is the feeling of those who have been active in the Federation that when once its possibilities for good are realized it will be looked upon as one of our most important agencies. Those who hold so largely a common faith should be able to work together for mutual benefit

and for the good of the world. The Federation might well be a means for coöperating in the all-important work of religious education, for spreading knowledge of liberal religious thought and offering the followers of the various faiths a better acquaintance and getting them accustomed to working together. And looking beyond the home field it may well be that the Federation shall become an organic unit in the International Congress of Religious Liberals, so that the larger body may have its permanent representation on this side of the ocean and closer fellowship with the world at large may result.

The conservative elements of Christianity have long since learned the value of coöperation. United action of the evangelical denominations has long been a matter of course. The smaller and weaker bodies, on the other hand, have missed the strength that comes by working together and each has gone its own way, unmindful of others walking the same road. The habits of thought of a hundred years are too deeply fixed and the methods and outward forms are too sacred to look for organic union of the denominations. But it is time that the people of the different denominations came to know one another better and to join wherever possible in general work for the common good.

It is a strange fact that the greatest victories of liberal religion have been in other households of faith than ours. The last half century has seen the downfall of Calvin and the triumph of Channing and Murray and Parker. The ancient creeds are as dead as their writers. Yet Unitarianism and Universalism are among the smallest sects and in some sections of the country are still lamentably misunderstood. To place liberal religion before the world in its true light and win for it the standing that its rich heritage and its great leaders deserve is a task which the Federation may reverently, earnestly, courageously undertake. Then, like the walls of Jericho, the walls of prejudice, bigotry, and hatred will fall before the blast of the trumpets,—but our trumpets, unlike those of old, must sound the note of brotherly love.

A LARGER LOYALTY

JESSE H. HOLMES, Ph.D., PROFESSOR OF HISTORY OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE, SWARTHMORE, PA., PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION.

Now that the war is behind us,—the war that was to end war, and to usher in a new era,—we find that we are busy preparing for new wars, and that the new era presents all the signs of a mere welter of contending selfishness. What is the matter with us? Where are all the high ideals, the noble hopes, which were to be the fruition of the terrible sowing of the battlefield?

Is not the central difficulty the fact that humanity has no common purpose, no common aim, and is therefore driven to the unending conflict of opposing and inconsistent aims and purposes? And the only possible common aim is the general good, the happiness of mankind. If any race or people is left out there is the basis of conflict; only humanity as a whole can be at peace. If Englishmen seek merely the good of the English, America that of Americans, and Japan that of the Japanese, then will English, American and Japanese come to war. Only if English, Japanese and Americans unite in seeking a larger good without national boundaries, is it possible for them to find a unity. Thus the narrow and selfish thing usually called patriotism is a menace to civilization, and we need to replace it by a larger loyalty which shall have no exclusions.

This idea was grasped by the early Christians. They were good citizens of any and every country, up to the point when that country demanded of them a disloyalty to mankind. At that point their patriotism came to an end: the nation might take their property, their lives, if need be, but they would not yield that deeper and better loyalty.

A kind of distortion of this idea remained to the church of the Holy Roman Empire. It retained at least the conception of universality; though it laid the emphasis rather upon authority than upon influence, upon rights rather than upon duties. Yet there were multitudes who gave themselves unstintedly to the spirit of universal helpfulness,—the Franciscans knew no na-

tional limits in their service, any more than did the Jesuits in their reaching after power. Protestantism, too, in its essence was a demand for a general freedom, though it was false to its own ideal almost from the start. But the church of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has very little meaning, and no clear message. It maintains the phrases of the world idea, but it does not believe them and does not teach men to trust in them. Its function has shrunk to that of a social club for middle-class people of comfortable incomes, in which it teaches mildly a middle-class personal morality, and feebly asserts certain medieval theological formulas, which it does not understand and is not really interested in.

And this feeble institution which cannot even arouse the hostility of the great working class among us, to say nothing of attracting its interest, sends missionaries to China, which its members from the "Christian" world are exploiting and forcing into an unwelcome militarism, to teach them,—what? and to Africa, where "Christian" people are killing, maiming, and enslaving; where "Christians" are enforcing years of military service upon the natives, not in defence of their own lands and homes but in fighting the battles of their conquerors in far-away lands and for causes not understood. What has the church had to say of the taking of negroes from Africa as slaves to kill European Christians? Nothing! A world institution with a world view?

Yet the Christian Church, if there can be said to be such a thing, is the only world-nation, and if it can be aroused to its real meaning it is still the hope of the world. It alone among our institutions has inherited the ideal of the world nation. If it can drop and forget meaningless claims to know technically the nature and structure of God, and give itself to using the actual power of God as a present fact, it can yet be the soul of the world. This is not a new way of dealing with things: indeed, it is the only way to grow in understanding. We use gravitation without understanding it: we know only our experience of it and the way it works. If we waited for an understanding of electricity before we used it, electric power would be a long way in the future. So is it with God, who is a present fact in the hearts and lives of men. We find there a driving power which will not

let us rest, urging us to the creation of a more perfect union, in which there shall be justice and good will for all mankind. It shows itself throughout all history, and especially in the Messianic Idea of the Old Testament. It was burning,—a Divine Fire,—in our hearts during the war and at the beginning of the Peace Negotiations. Where then was the Church crying aloud that the day of the Lord was at hand? keeping alight the Divine Fire? It was nowhere! It had no voice, no message, no influence.

Yet the opportunity is still here, and the nations wait for the Voice. Men long inconceivably for a brotherly and peaceful world,—always excepting the futile old men of the last generation who continue to work the old selfish national game of diplomacy, with its struggles for advantage, its secret bargainings, its wicked encouragement of wars and treacheries, its insistent preparations for new and greater wars in the future. We, the people, do not want these things: we have no desire to gain by the loss of others: we are ready and willing to lose for the help of those in distress. We want a Christian world and are willing to pay for it, but our leaders have no skill of leadership in that direction, and no understanding of the deep and almost despairing desire of the peoples.

Yet that desire is not complex or its interpretation hard to understand. We want a world based on a good-will that has no national boundaries; and we believe that good-will is a sufficient power to make such a world possible, if only we recognize this great though simple common purpose. That means nothing less than that we believe in the power of God in the human heart and will as an actual usable power, and are willing to trust it and take the consequences of our trust. We know by experience that through us this will not work perfectly or immediately. It involves a willingness to face loss or even death in the attempt to carry out the plan; but dependence on force involves all these on a vastly larger scale, and then fails to get results.

Of course the devil offers the kingdoms of the world! Did not Jesus want them when Satan offered them? Certainly he wanted them, but he knew that Satan could not deliver the goods. The Church has not been so wise,—it still falls for the offer, although it has been cheated ten

thousand times. What about changing our leadership, changing our methods, recognizing clearly what we want and taking the new way, since the old way leads into chaos? Is not this the great adventure of our generation?

In presenting Rev. Charles W. Wendte, D. D., as the next speaker, the presiding officer said:

"Our first speaker this morning is our friend who has so long been with us, without whom this Federation and the International Congress of Religious Liberals would not have been possible. In the fifty years of his ministry he has sought to promote fellowship in religion and has brought happiness and cheer to the hearts of all who have come under his influence. Of him we may surely say, as Whittier said of Dr. Wendte's friend Thomas Starr King, 'We love him as few men were ever loved.' I take pleasure in presenting Rev. Charles W. Wendte, D. D., chairman of the Executive Committee of the Federation, its founder and former secretary."

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERALS: ITS HISTORY AND MISSION

Charles W. Wendte, D.D., Boston, Mass.

I

In the year 1908 a group of influential churchmen issued a call to all the Protestant churches in the United States to rise above all merely denominational ties and interests and meet together for the purpose of forming an alliance or federation for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of God on earth.

There was a large response to this appeal. Among the church bodies which sent delegates to the preliminary meeting in Philadelphia were the Unitarians, the Universalists, and the Liberal or Progressive Friends. These Liberal Christian bodies soon discovered that their presence was unwelcome, and that their coöperation in the newly organized association, "The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America," had been made impossible for them by doctrinal qualifications of membership to which they could not subscribe. Accordingly the Unitarian delegates, Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale,

Dr. Charles W. Eliot and his son, Rev. Samuel A. Eliot, Ex-Governor John D. Long of Massachusetts, and men of prominence in the other liberal sects, whose names I do not recall, withdrew from the assembly.

As the liberal Christian denominations were not permitted to unite with their more orthodox brethren in religious work they determined at least to unite with each other for fellowship and in the furtherance of their common interests. For some time past there had existed in Philadelphia a Monday morning ministers' club which comprised broad-minded and progressive clergymen of half a dozen or more denominations, including the Reform Jews, which met in the social rooms of the Race Street Meeting House of the Society of (Progressive) Friends, under the genial presidency of Henry W. Wilbur, the missionary secretary of the Society of Friends. Among the leading spirits of this ministerial club were Henry Wilbur, Rev. Charles E. St. John, the then minister of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, Rev. Dr. George H. Ferris, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dr. J. Clarence Lee of the Universalist Church, Rev. Dr. Crapsey, rector of an Episcopal church, Mr. S. Burns Weston, leader of the Ethical Society, and Rabbis Berkowitz and Krauskopf. After some correspondence with the present writer, at that time Secretary of the Department of Fellowship and Comity of the American Unitarian Association, Henry Wilbur accepted his suggestion of a national federation of religious liberals, and called a meeting in the Race Street Meeting House to confer as to the advisability of forming such an association.

By a coincidence this meeting assembled in Philadelphia at the same time, December 3, 1908, at which the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America was holding its first public session in that city.

Let it be said here that it was in no spirit of antagonism to that admirable and effective organization that our far more modest federation was undertaken. In the twelve years that have elapsed since then we have never indulged in any unkind comment upon its utterances or actions, even when they widely diverged from our own point of view. We have rejoiced rather in the excellent service it has rendered the religious community; its brave witness to truth and humanity, and its

growing influence, coincident, in our opinion, with its growing liberality of sentiment. We have gladly followed where it led the way in civic righteousness and social service.

Our own work has been more restricted but always constructive. At our first meeting, attended by some fifty persons, we adopted the following as our declaration of purpose: "To promote the religious life by united testimony for sincerity, freedom, and progress in religion, by social service, and a fellowship of the spirit beyond the lines of sect and creed."

To this ideal we have tried to be true during the twelve years of our history. Our resources in numbers, wealth, and prestige have ever been small. None of our officers have been salaried. All our service has been gratuitous. The nine public conventions we have held have presented programmes which for comprehensiveness of purpose, loftiness of aim, breadth of fellowship, and intellectual interest will challenge comparison with any similar gatherings in the United States. The eight printed reports of our proceedings and papers are eagerly sought by the college and public libraries of the United States and are so many milestones of religious progress in America.

These congresses have been very unequal as to attendance and publicity, but in the value of their public testimony they have seldom fallen below their highest standards.

Our first congress, held in April, 1909, in Philadelphia, was a remarkable occasion. The number of members enrolled was nearly a thousand. At the opening symposium of this congress the Roman Catholic Church was represented by Hon. Charles J. Bonaparte, one of its most distinguished laymen, the Protestant Church by Dr. W. H. P. Faunce, President of Brown University, the Jewish Community by Rabbi Dr. Philipson of Cincinnati, and the Colored Americans by Dr. Booker T. Washington.

Other speakers at the meetings were Dr. William C. Gannett, Edwin D. Mead, Hon. Curtis Guild, Rev. Frederic W. Perkins, Dr. George B. Foster, Rev. Clay MacCauley, Justice F. J. Swayze, Alexander Johnson, John Mitchell, Dr. Wm. I. Hull, Dr. Francis G. Peabody, Prof. Anna Garlin Spencer, Rev. Charles G. Ames,

Dr. Jesse Holmes, and Rev. Carl A. Voss, while Henry Wilbur presided over and coördinated all the speaking by his geniality and friendliness.

It is impossible to dwell at similar length on the characteristics of our subsequent congresses. The one, also held in our home city, Philadelphia, which commemorated Theodore Parker's life and services; the third or New York Congress (1911), with forty speakers, held in various churches and at the Cooper Institute; the fourth, at Rochester, N. Y., in 1914, in which the philosophers, Rudolf Eucken and Rabindranath Tagore, took part and met each other for the first time, and in which Professor Walter Rauschenbusch took a prominent part; the fifth (1915), in Philadelphia, which discussed the Higher Patriotism and International Questions, as well as Race Problems; the 1916 Congress in Oakland, California; the Pittsburgh Congress of 1917—one of the most successful of all, with a committee of invitation which included 28 clergymen, representing 14 sects, and large gatherings in Rabbi F. Leonard Levy's splendid temple, in the German-American church of Dr. Carl Voss, the Chamber of Commerce, and in Unitarian and Methodist and Episcopal Churches, were all notable occasions.

In 1917 our Eighth Congress was held in Boston. It was a case of carrying coals to Newcastle; while our ninth, held in the historic Quaker Meeting House in Longwood, Pa., a rural community, proved a truly inspiring occasion.

We hold our present convention, the tenth, again in Boston, in connection with the Pilgrim Tercentenary exercises and the International Liberal Congress. May it prove a worthy successor to those that went before, and may the work and influence of our National Federation of Religious Liberals continue through many generations!

It has seemed a duty to myself and you to withdraw from the executive duties which I have performed for the past twelve years and to commit them to younger, but experienced hands. In Mr. Frank H. Burt we believe we have found the right man for the position. We bespeak for him your unstinted confidence and support. For myself I desire to continue my interest in this association so long as life shall last, and in an advisory capacity may yet render it some service.

We have had the sorrow of losing from our councils faithful and endeared friends and fellow-workers—Henry Wilbur, Charles St. John, Dr. Ferris, Rabbi J. L. Levy, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Walter Rauschenbusch and others. But the ideas and ideals they upheld and embodied still inspire us in the work which remains for us to do. May we prove equal to the opportunities and tasks which await us.

A few reflections, suggested by this occasion and our relation to it, may fitly close this address:

II

One purpose of the National Federation is Social Service. At every meeting of the Society the duty of bearing testimony on this subject has been emphasized. Addresses covering all sides of much-disputed social, industrial, and economic questions have been made and testimonials adopted in behalf of the great reforms of the day. Our aim has been to keep ahead of the action of our respective denominations on this subject, and to lead them forward into more courageous courses.

As we have only a single session allotted to us on the present program it was found impossible to present here an address of a social character. However, to go a little afield in these remarks, let me call your attention to an important contribution to the industrial and economic issues of our day which is afforded by the Pilgrim Fathers' experience with Communism as a working method in society. So far as I know, no one during these Pilgrim anniversaries has referred to this interesting feature of their early years at Plymouth. The Pilgrim Fathers originally were communistic in their industrial polity, the holding of their possessions in common being, as they believed, the polity enjoined by the first apostles. (Book of Acts, ii, 44-45, and iv, 32.)

On its economic side the Pilgrim colony seems to have been a joint stock and communistic system of labor and living; although this was not carried out rigidly in every detail. Their landed property, improvements, implements of toil, etc., were under common ownership, and all shared alike in their united endeavors and toils. But, as was the case with the early Christian congregations, the scheme did not work. When after a two years' trial it had brought the colony more than once to the verge of

ruin, and it had become a question of life or death with them, Gov. Bradford wisely and courageously braved the displeasure of the company in England, the "Merchant Adventurers," under whose auspices they had come to the New World, and put an end to the experiment. During the scant spring of 1623 he assigned all the detached persons in the colony to live with families, and then temporarily divided the land of the colony among the several families in proportion to their size, leaving every household to shift for itself or suffer want. The result was most happy. Discontent, envy, idleness, and malingering ceased. Industry, thrift, and productivity increased. Years afterwards Bradford wrote, "Any general want or suffering hath not been among them since to this day."

In his History of Plymouth Plantation, he quaintly tells us:

> "The experience that was had in this comone course and condition, tried sundrie years, and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanitie of that conceite of Platos & other ancients, applauded by some of later times;—that ye taking away of propertie, and bringing in comunitie into a comone wealth, would make them happy and florishing; as if they were wiser then God. For this comunitie (so farr as it was) was found to breed much confusion & discontent, and retard much imploymēt that would have been to their benefite and comforte. For ye yong-men that were most able and fitte for labour & service did repine that they should spend their time & streingth to worke for other mens wives and children, with out any recompence. The strong, or man of parts, had no more in devission of victails & cloaths, then he that was weake and not able to doe a quarter ye other could; this was thought injuestice. The aged and graver men to be ranked and equalised in labours, and victails, cloaths, &c., with ye meaner & yonger sorte, thought it some indignite & disrespect unto them. And for mens wives to be commanded to doe servise for other men, as dresing their meate, washing their cloaths, &c., they deemd it a kind of slaverie, neither could many husbands well brooke it. Upon ye poynte all being to have alike, and all to doe alike, they thought them selves in ye like condition, and one as good as another; and so, if it did not cut of those relations that God hath set amongest men, yet it did at least much diminish and take of ye mutuall respects, that should be preserved amongst them."

And so this communistic experiment, the first, doubtless, instituted on the soil of America, came to an end;

very much as its prototype in the early Christian community had been allowed quietly to drop out of sight, as bitter experience reduced the utopias of the imagination to juster proportions, and enthusiasms were chastened by fact and good sense.

This ought to be an impressive lesson to those of our present generation who dream of a communistic order of society.

III

Another principal aim of the National Federation of Religious Liberals is to promote the *Spiritual Unity of Christendom,* and of all mankind.

The division and subdivision of Protestant Christendom into so many different, and but too often rival and discordant, sects forms a melancholy spectacle. It has among its results, waste of resources, duplication and dissipation of energies, division of counsels; and even worse, it fosters dissension and strife, arrogance and intolerance in the Christian community.

On the other hand, we would have derived little benefit from our observance of these Pilgrim anniversaries if we did not learn from them that freedom of thought and independent action in religious concerns are as the breath of life to the individual and the community which cherish them.

Conformity to a universally accepted creed and church may generate even worse evils than sectarianism.

Said our great Boston churchman and preacher, Phillips Brooks:

"Five hundred years ago, if you had gone into a little hamlet in a land of churches you would have found one church, and all the people worshipping there. That was church union. On the face of it this might have seemed a good thing. But it was merely a sign of the lack of activity in the human mind. The apparent disunion of churches to-day is a sign of the healthy activity of the human mind expressing itself in slightly differing forms."

This was also the opinion of another great Bostonian divine, Dr. William Ellery Channing, who tells us:

"The dissensions of Protestantism go far to constitute its strength. Through them its spirit, which is freedom, the only spirit which Rome cannot conquer, is kept alive."

This individualism, this separatist spirit, may, of course, be carried to a harmful extreme, and lead to pitiful exhibitions of the sectarian temper. There is surely no cause or justification for the nine different kinds of Methodism and thirteen kinds of Presbyterianism in this country. That such a multiplicity of sects should be especially characteristic of the United States and Great Britain is doubtless due in great part to the influence of their free political institutions. Nations which have charge of their own affairs and enjoy unfettered discussion cannot be compelled into a mechanical uniformity in religion. The devotion to civil and religious liberty of the English Presbyterians, the insistence on personal piety by the Independents, the demand for spiritual freedom by the Baptists, the zeal for souls of the Methodists, and the ethical and humanitarian fervor of Quaker, Unitarian and Universalist, have each and all helped to broaden and enrich the religious life of English-speaking nations. Who can deny the great service rendered to the Christian cause by these non-conforming sects?

It is not their denominational existence, it is their but too frequent sectarian temper which is to be deplored.

As human nature is constituted there will always be, I imagine, differences of opinion, taste, and habit among men in matters of religion, as in all else. These differences are the very condition of their spiritual growth and culture, and of the free and constant development of religion in human society.

First and most fundamental is the line of cleavage between those of conservative and those of radical temper, those who look forward and those who look back for their inspiration and strength; the progressives and the reactionaries in church and society.

But these two great types of believers are again subdivided into different schools of faith and worship.

There are Christians who prefer to approach the great topics of religion by the way of their historic imagination, to receive their spiritual nurture from the creeds, sacraments, symbols, and ceremonies of past ages. They prefer to live in the dim religious twilight, the border land of mystery and marvel and awe. They shrink from facing the central source of all life by direct approach. The light from above must be mediated to them through

Cathedral windows, the altar service, the consecrated wafer, the apostolic succession, a supernaturally ordained clergy, with power to bind and to loose, to enjoin and absolve.

Another type of Christian demands intellectual assurance, truth congealed into dogmas, eternal and final, and confirmed by infallible and authoritative revelation.

Still another finds emotional religion, rapturous communion with Christ and God, the outpouring of the soul in hymn and prayer, the worship most congenial and helpful to him.

Through conscience to God is the way of salvation to the ethical believer; service to humanity the broad highway by which in our day other multitudes seek to uplift their own lives and bless the lives of their fellows.

Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind; proving all things and holding fast to what is good. But how can all these various types of believers, while remaining true to their own religious instincts and central loyalties, yet be brought to recognize that they all alike share in the Christian inheritance, have the same responsibility for one another's spiritual welfare and should work together for the promotion of Christian ideals of world-brotherhood and world-service?

Many have been the endeavors made in times past and present to overcome the excesses of the sectarian spirit, and to unite all Christians in one great family of brothers and sisters, acknowledging a common Master, a common code of ethics, and a common faith in divine things. Assuredly this catholic aim is a noble one. That it has so constantly failed is due mainly to the mistaken methods by which the Christian Church has sought to accomplish its purpose.

The root of the difficulty lies in this, that the Churches seek to unite Christians on the basis of their intellectual agreements instead of their spiritual affinities and moral needs. Uniformity of belief, conformity to a single church, has been their aim—an impossible task in a freedom-loving, instructed and progressive order of society.

The "testimony" which our Association adopted some years ago, expresses in condensed form our attitude and mission with regard to this question of religious unity:

"True and enduring religious fellowship cannot be brought about by uniformity either of belief or worship. It can only be attained by oneness of moral sympathy and purpose; by mutual respect for differences of opinion and custom combined with that Unity of the Spirit which makes possible inter-religious fellowship and co-operation for human and social service beyond the lines of sect and creed. Not by the amalgamation of existing doctrines and forms, nor by the general acceptance of an 'irreducible minimum' of belief [such as the Pan-Anglican Bishops have recently presented to the world]; not by an attempt to create a single and universal Church; only by the voluntary *federation* of the religious forces of the community for promoting, amidst large varieties of thought and church connection, the moral and spiritual ideals they hold in common, can real and effective religious fellowship be established. All religious men and women alike are animated by the love of truth and purity, the love of God displayed in love to man, by a common hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the simple trusts and hopes of the human heart. These, then, are the only desirable tests, the only possible terms of a genuine and widely accepted religious fellowship. In these alone will be found the true basis of religious union, and the warrant for the federated endeavors of the existing churches and denominations."—*Testimony of the National Federation of Religious Liberals, 1908.*

It is wonderful to note a foregleam of this larger conception of religious fellowship in one of the old Puritan worthies of Massachusetts Bay, a typical Puritan preacher, in whom we should least have expected it—Rev. Cotton Mather, of Boston (1663-1728), who in a letter to his son, Rev. Samuel Mather, declares: "Piety will anon be the only basis of (Church) union, and pious men, in several forms, will come to love and live as brethren."

Permit me, in closing, a modern illustration which confirms the large-minded hope and prayer of this Boston preacher of olden time.

A few years ago there was held in this city an Exhibit of Foreign Missions, a notable display of the missionary activities of the Churches of Christendom in the extension of their faith throughout the world. Amongst its features was a huge canvas map or plan

of the City of Boston, covering an entire wall of one of the exhibition halls, and illumined from behind by electric lights. On this map were indicated not only the streets and squares of the city but the various institutions of piety and benevolence which the Christian spirit maintained in it—churches, schools, hospitals, asylums, refuges, and other agencies—a truly impressive showing. The character of each of these institutions was indicated by an appropriate symbol, a cross, crown, star, crescent, circle, or other device. When the map had been completed the committee in charge assembled for a preliminary view of it. The lights were turned on and the committee were greatly pleased with the outcome of their labors.

But one good sister demurred. The exhibit did not show to what denominations these works of piety and mercy in Boston were to be accredited. There should be placed on the map some further indication by which each of these sects should be given credit for its piety and humanity. This view of the matter found favor, and it was decided to add the proposed feature to the map. After a few days the committee reassembled and found that their wishes had been carried out; but as it was impossible to inscribe the new additions on the original canvas they were displayed by a series of colored labels which had been gummed upon it. Thus a blue label represented the Presbyterians, a silver label the Baptists, a golden label the Unitarians, a green label the Roman Catholics, a purple label the Episcopalians, and so on. This was deemed satisfactory, and at the command of the committee the electric lights were turned on, that they might enjoy their completed work.

But lo! these worthy men and women had forgotten that in the nature of things these invisible wires conveyed not only light but heat. After burning steadily for a few minutes their warmth communicated itself to the freshly gummed labels, loosening their hold on the canvas, and one by one, before the eyes of the astonished committee, they disengaged themselves and fluttered and fell to the floor!

Which things are a parable.

Even so, when the *light* of a liberal and spiritual religion takes possession of men's minds; when the *warmth* of human love and charity makes itself felt in

their hearts, all petty sectarian labels will fall and fade away; merely denominational interests will not be allowed to take precedence of the larger fellowship of the spirit. They will know themselves to be common children of the Universal Father, brothers and sisters of one great family. They will no longer lay stress on the things that divide but on the common element which unites them, the Unity of the Spirit in the bonds of love.

As a poem from the Japanese beautifully expresses it:

"Be it crystal of snowflake frail,
Be it globule of hoary hail,
Be it layer of thick-ribbed ice,
Let but the sun's warm rays upon them fall.
They meet and merge in one element all."

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Rabbi David Philipson, D.D., Rockdale Avenue Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio

It would seem to be particularly appropriate that representatives of liberal movements in religion should foregather in a meeting like this to celebrate the tercentenary of the landing on these Pactolian shores of those protagonists in the struggle for religious freedom who were the pioneers in that toilsome journey of the years which made possible the great achievement of the fathers of this republic as expressed in the immortal words of the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This is the charter of our religious liberty, for whether we call ourselves Christian liberals, or Jewish liberals, or religious liberals without any further sectarian label, we are all one in our American religious liberalism, brethren in the spirit if not in the flesh, and as such brethren we are the spiritual descendants of the brave men and women who three hundred years ago embarked upon the great adventure, the end of which is not yet. True, among those pilgrims there was no representative of the Jewish faith, and some might therefore find it incongruous that a spokesman for that faith should appear here. But it is because as an American citizen and a religious liberal I look upon myself and those I represent as spiritual heirs of the legacy of freedom bequeathed to all strugglers for religious liberty by the Pilgrim Fathers that I feel altogether at home here with my American brethren of all shades of opinions.

From another angle, too, it is quite meet that a Jewish voice be heard in the chorus of praise extolling the daring of those intrepid Englishmen whose names are on all our lips to-day. Read the history of Plymouth Colony by Bradford, peruse the sermons of Robinson, delve into the thought of Brewster, and the indebtedness of those leaders in the Pilgrim movement to the writers of the Old Testament stands out clear and indubitable.

The theocracy of ancient Israel was reproduced in the theocracy of this Pilgrim movement. God being ruler, no man, be he king or potentate, no human institution, be it sacrificial system in ancient days or established church in later times, could in the final instance stand between God the Father and the human creature, God's child. This is the fundamental teaching of the great prophets, psalmists and thinkers of the Old Testament, and it is the no less fundamental claim of their disciples, these Pilgrim Fathers of ours. If through this undaunted facing of the perils of the unknown sea and the distant wilderness these Pilgrims brought the blessings of religious liberty to the modern descendants of the ancient people of the Bible among others, it would seem but poetic historical justice inasmuch as they had drawn their inspiration from that Bible.

Truly, God does work in wondrous ways. The Pilgrims, those devout and earnest students of Israel's inspired chronicles, became the instrument through whom a home of religious freedom, our blessed America, was secured for the latter-day children of Israel, outcasts and pariahs in every European land in mediaeval days. There is not a Jew in all America and in all the world but utters a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the Pilgrim Fathers, who so fully repaid their debt to the Old Testament by laying in this land the foundations of that religious freedom from which none have benefitted more than the still living descendants of the stock that produced Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Jesus, Peter and Paul, the founders and propagators of Judaism, the mother religion, and Christianity, the daughter faith. Blessed, yea, thrice blessed be the memory of these fathers of modern religious liberty. It seems to me that to them and through them a new revelation had been vouchsafed to the world. Again the voice of God sounded as in the ancient time, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the house of bondage." From the oppression of a state church had the Pilgrims fled, from bondage of religious intolerance had they been freed. This was the new Canaan, this the new promised land. Therefore we sing hosannah at this anniversary season and together join in a fervent Hallelujah, Praise unto God!

My thoughts at this time cannot but turn back to the

days agone and occupy themselves with what was. As a Jew I cannot but recall the conditions of Jewish life in that year 1620, the point of departure for our gathering to-day. Far be it from me to mar this happy occasion by rehearsing the dread story of persecution and murder, of expulsion and torture, which formed the constant background of Jewish existence in that black period. But I cannot refrain from calling to mind the fact that in that year in which the Pilgrim Fathers set sail from Europe no Jew could live as a confessor of his faith in the land of England. Expelled from the land in 1291, they were not permitted to return until Cromwell's day, in 1655. True, recent research has brought out the fact that there were a number of Jews living in England during this period, but they could not confess their religion openly. They were known as Portuguese. They were Jews secretly. It is therefore very probable, nay, almost certain, that until they came to Holland, which indeed, barring Turkey, was the one European country in which the Jews lived free from oppression, the followers of Robinson and Brewster may never have seen a Jew in proper person. What a far cry from such a condition of affairs to this Interdenominational Fellowship gathering! And yet I feel sure that could those real freemen speak to-day they would confess themselves rather contemporaries of ours than of the tyrannous repressers of the rights of conscience of their own time.

It is also of extreme interest to recall in this connection that the year preceding that in which the Jews were readmitted to settlement in England marked the coming to this country of the small band of Jews who have been called the Jewish Pilgrim Fathers. In the first half of the seventeenth century Jews had settled in South America and the islands of the Carribbean. When religious persecution pursued them also thither a few hardy spirits embarked in one of these southern ports in a boat named the Santa Catarina, and making sail for the north, landed at New Amsterdam in 1654, thirty-four years after their Christian fellow-seekers for a new home set foot on the shore of New England.

The passengers of both the Mayflower and the Santa Catarina had the same mission, the quest for religious liberty. Neither knew of the other, but here their dis-

embodied spirits meet and here their undying heroism fills the mind. A whole world is celebrating the exploits of the Pilgrim Fathers, and rightly so. Those humble Jews who were refused a landing in New Amsterdam by Peter Stuyvesant and were admitted only after lengthy negotiations are little known. But I am sure that you will not consider as inappropriate the mention of them here by one, who as an American, glories in the opportunity of paying reverence to the memory of the Pilgrim Fathers in company with his fellow Americans, but who can also not forget on this great occasion the tremendous contribution made to the cause of religious liberty by those thousands and tens of thousands of Jews who throughout the centuries lived in wretchedness and misery, endured disgrace and infamy, and went to their death rather than renounce their ancestral faith.

Had these Jews in all the persecuting lands of Europe been willing to accept the dominant religion they would have lived at ease. But nay, they could not, they would not cast out the truth as they saw the truth. They endured nameless woes and countless ills, the ghetto's plague, the garb's disgrace, rather than become recreant to their soul's conviction. Of all these myriads known and unknown, sung and unsung, the small company who landed here in 1654, the names of the most of whom are not even known, are the sign and symbol for me. As a Jew in faith I feel constrained to make mention of them also on this day. They symbolize Judaism's contribution to the cause of religious freedom, the high cause that is the real glory of our country, the true grandeur of our nation. To my mind this is America's greatest achievement. This was something altogether new in the world, the separation of church and state, the right of the individual to approach his Maker as he would. Towards this the great deed of 1620 led the way. True, the Old World spirit of religious bigotry appeared time and again in the colonies, but these were only survivals from a dark past that were bound to disappear in the light of the advancing day.

The progress was steadily onward and forward. The United States became the hope of mankind. Here every religion could develop untrammeled. Here liberal movements flourished as nowhere else. The seed sown by

the Pilgrim Fathers has produced a marvelous fruitage. These fathers were picked men. They were the precursors of the millions who came after them and through the spirit set in action by the Pilgrim Fathers have made our country a homogeneous composite, if I may use so paradoxical a term, a unity out of great diversity, the melting pot in which many incongruous elements have been fused. Through this process our nation has become the chosen people of these latter days. This was finely expressed sometime ago by one of America's leading thinkers when he characterized the people of this country in these terms:

"Differing as the inhabitants of this country do in all other respects, they are alike in this, that they have been chosen, selected from the nations of the earth by their responsiveness beyond the responsiveness of their kindred, to the ideals of freedom. All who have come to our shores have come because they have wanted more opportunity to live, to be men among men, and they have believed that here the opportunity would be found. They have wanted economic freedom, religious freedom, freedom of mind, political freedom. Thus in respect of precisely that kind of mental and practical similarity which is essential to a great national organization, which shall combine unity in greater matters with endless differences in minor things, the inhabitants of the United States are the picked men of the world."

This unity in greater things was brought out strikingly and emphatically during the great war. And notably the higher religious unity! How many an interdenominational fellowship meeting was held in every city in the country; yea, interdenominational fellowship meetings not only of religious liberals, as is this gathering, but of conservatives and liberals, of Jews and Protestants and Catholics, of all men coming as children of one Father merging their earth-made distinctions in their God-made likenesses. And what interdenominational fellowship meetings the camps and the battlefields presented! What moving tales came to us of priest and pastor and rabbi fellowshipping in bringing religious messages and religious comfort to the wounded and the dying! The war frequently produced an exaltation of spirit that made it appear as though men had indeed succeeded in piercing beneath the artificial distinctions of creed and dogma and of finding the fundamental and elemental brotherhood that makes the whole world kin. It seemed that the fervid longing of the great singers of religious brotherhood

had found realization and that the day had come when Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, believer and unbeliever, had found one another as men and gazing into one another's souls had recognized their spirit likeness.

But we seem to have been experiencing a reaction from the glorious sentiments which bathed men's souls in those years of common struggle and common danger. The old bitternesses which during the war suffered eclipse seem to be reasserting themselves. We had fondly imagined that the old hatreds, antipathies and prejudices had burned themselves into ashes. But the ashes are being stirred and the coals which we had fondly imagined were altogether extinguished are again being fanned into flame by the fomenters of religious, racial, and national antagonisms. A great inter-church movement has failed; liberals and reactionaries are still far apart; enemies of the Jews are making anti-Jewish propaganda even in this country: there are many disturbing signs. Was then all the advance along the lines of fellowship during the war period merely the excitation of hysteria? merely a war symptom? are we really falling back into the old pre-war attitudes? God forbid a calamity like that! I cannot believe that all the splendid manifestations of unity and fellowship that cheered our hearts and exalted our spirits were merely a passing show with no element of permanence. I have the firm faith that there have been definite steps forward despite the occasional alarming symptoms of retrogression. And that faith of mine finds nourishment in a gathering like this. Of all the meetings throughout the land in this tercentenary year, none, I take it, is more significant than this of the future possibilities that lay hidden in the dash of the Pilgrim Fathers into the unknown. A meeting like this could impossibly have been held in that year 1620 or for a long time thereafter. But through these three hundred years the spirit of religious freedom has been growing and growing. We here are enjoying the usufructs of that growth. This is our heritage from the Pilgrim Fathers. As is said in a famous Biblical passage, so say also we, "We will not give up the heritage of our fathers." Shall we who are called religious liberals not dedicate ourselves anew in this commemoration year to the high task of contributing what we can,

be it in lesser or greater degree, towards making ever firmer the foundations of religious liberty which the Pilgrims laid? Shall we not strive to keep our America the home of religious freedom, and to confound every reactionary effort to sectarianize our public institutions? Shall we not continue the work of the Pilgrims to keep forever separate church and state in each and all their departments and to render inviolate the rights of individual conscience in all matters affecting freedom of speech and freedom of thought? That truly is the great task of religious liberalism, aye, of the true American spirit. That American spirit has been dearly bought; we hold it in trust. That trust we, as religious liberals, may never betray. We must bequeath it unsullied to those who come after us, even as an American latter-day poet has so well expressed it in the lines:

"Our Fathers, in a wondrous age,
Ere yet the earth was small,
Insured to us our heritage
And doubted not at all
That we, the children of their heart,
Which then did beat so high,
In later time should play like part
For our posterity.

"Dear bought and clear a thousand year
Our fathers' title runs;
Make we likewise our sacrifice,
Defrauding not our sons."

CHURCH FEDERATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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All churches are pretty well agreed by this time that their main purpose is to lead men and women, girls and boys, into an intelligent directing of their lives on lines laid down by their divine natures, and to help others to do the same. The whole business settles down to this: to provoke one another to conscious intelligent action, to create a desire to establish personal relations with the Almighty, to teach men to feel increasingly their responsibility for contributing to the common good, and to help all to become conscious of the awakening of their spiritual forces by working together as the children of God. The form of worship, the type of theology, the character of program, have value only as they lead to this personal development. It is true that this plain avowal of purpose has not been made as frequently and as emphatically as it should, and that many communities are still in the dark as to the meaning of their churches, yet under every church in the land these main purposes will be found to be running deep and strong.

It requires little prophetic insight to forecast that if these ideals are held clearly and firmly the churches will soon come to be looked upon as authoritative in matters pertaining to the spirit. This brings us to the point of the community side. The community itself has an angle from which it views its churches and which we would do well to consider. Instead of being thought of as an organization, calling for sympathy, support and attention, a church may be accepted by the people as their own output and as a thing most expressive of their best life. It will impress the people so deeply by its fine distinctive handling of spiritual values, that they will naturally, and in a large measure proudly, recognize it as the leader in religion and idealism. They will look up to it with even more deference than they look up to their teachers, lawyers, and doctors, and will acknowledge this one organization as holding all to great thoughts concerning the soul, heaven, duty, love, Christ, and God.

If the churches of a community hope in any worthy degree to measure up to these expectations of the people, they will do well to follow a few plain paths which are being found to appeal strongly to the common sense of mankind. They must join in all social work which can be done coöperatively. A committee of leaders can easily determine how best to take hold of the activities for the young people. Forums, playgrounds, and community houses are enterprises in which all can unite, contributing brains and money to the advancement of the general good. The churches are discovering that to get under the whole social proposition with other organizations, not only makes it possible to do a big constructive work, but leaves the churches themselves more free for intensive spiritual effort. The demand for this coöperation is so general that if an individual church attempts to maintain an exclusive social plant, thereby splitting the social life, the people are very likely to look upon the project with disfavor and distrust.

Again, to steadily gain ground as the acknowledged authority in the spiritual realm, there should be a consensus of opinion among church people concerning the fundamentals of religion. The churches must publish the fact that there are some great beliefs upon which they are agreed. Some truths have survived controversy and have sunk into the consciousness of the race. They have become the bone and marrow of our corporate life, and we should make it known that there is no difference of opinion regarding them. The existence of God and Christ, our moral obligations, and the immortality of the soul, we are sufficiently agreed upon to say so. It might surprise us perhaps to discover how largely the community itself is with us in our great religious convictions. Placing a distinctive emphasis upon the truths we agree upon will go a long way towards strengthening confidence in our ability to deal skillfully with other religious subjects.

And finally, there should be the widest freedom for thorough-going thinking upon religious truths. It may be contended that the place for research work is in the theological schools, and with the Biblical scholars. This is true in the main, yet it is becoming more and more apparent that the strength of the individual church lies in its power to prick men and women into clear and per-

sistent thinking. To lead men to interpret their daily experiences in terms of their relationship to the universe, and a divine mind back of it who is a Heavenly Father, is the special commission laid upon every church, which should not be refused. A church organization is more than the sum of its members. The play back and forth of one personality upon another creates new forces and deeper insights which make it possible for new truths to break through to the world, and which must be reckoned with in weighing the value of church association and fellowship.

We are dealing with human beings entrusted with the fullest possible amount of freedom, created to become richly endowed free moral agents. Any proposed method of helping them must give plenty of space for their mental activities to develop and grow. The mind is the best instrument we have for soul expression and every incentive must be presented to quicken it and keep it alert. With this we are not surprised if there is, to a certain degree, separation. Clear thinking separates at the same time that it unites. It separates in opinions, judgments, theories, and methods; but it unites as it leads to a greater understanding of the meanings of the infinite mind. One comes through each mental power into a universe where new conditions rise that all are under bonds to love, devotion and fellowship. To maintain in a community a fine balance between the mind being thinking and a devotion to subjective social activities is the most delicate relationship which churches can hold to each other.

From these considerations it is clear that there can be no doubtful gain in reducing all churches to a common denominator. The proposal to level all religious organizations to one type may appeal to some who do not think through the issues, to those who do, such a procedure would tend only to retard progress. Those who are working in Federated Churches are not looking for, or desiring, dead uniformity throughout the Christian world. They are however, expecting a stronger union in spirit. And there is every indication that such a union is steadily growing. For the purpose of winning humanity for our spiritual commonwealth, and having a world-view looking for the unities we present, there should be a big religious body, incarnated in millions of

tolerant, devoted men and women who are absolutely at one on a few things, and who respect the mental integrity of each other in the pursuit of discoverable truths.

How surely we are drawing closer in the spirit can be seen by examining some of the happenings of late in the religious world. In the Inter-Church movement the cleavage so sharply drawn between the Evangelical and Liberal churches was resented not because theological differences were emphasized,—that is perfectly proper and necessary at times,—but because the unity of spirit was threatened. All felt that this was the thing of value, the sacred thing upon which unholy hands should not be placed. The Christian world had attained to a high degree of love and trust at a great cost, and this trust ought not to be endangered. The appeal of the Lambeth Conference is another case in point. We may question the real value of the overture for the non-Conformist minister, but there can be no question as to the compelling force of a growing spiritual body which forced that overture.

These things are to be borne in mind when we come to close grips with the perplexing problems that some of our churches are presenting. Irritated beyond endurance, some worthy reformers have reached the place where they would like to sweep all the churches off the globe and begin over again, establishing a brand-new church in each community. If such a rushing scheme were possible it would not get us very far. It is with the conservative temper that the future of the churches is to be approached.

Admittedly, many of our churches are in a reprehensible condition, and some are in disgrace. The inferior brand of ministers, the rise to power and consideration of clubs and organizations which are exalting Christian ethics, the general increase in education, and the mighty pull of the pleasurable life, are leaving some of our churches in the situation not of the Priest and the Levite, but of the man himself who was left robbed by the wayside. Too many churches are religious paupers, partially supported by their denominations. Too often the destiny of a church is in the hands of a small incompetent group of men and women who find themselves entrusted with valuable property, sacred traditions, and the eternal salvation of many a youth of the village. Resorting again to the

community's point of view, notice how helpless it is to change things. They cannot put the incompetent managers out of office. They do the natural thing: ignore the organization and place it in an incidental position in their estimate.

The Church of Christ has not failed because a small proportion of organizations, under exceedingly difficult conditions, is showing lack of skill in handling the situation. It would be like saying that government has failed because Mexico and Russia present an appearance of failure in their struggle for self-government. On close inquiry it may be found that even these countries are working out their destinies in a more or less commendable manner. There is no deep reason, therefore, why we should go over the rural districts with a single eye to combining the churches. To reshape the grouping already in existence, merely to make larger groups, might disturb a condition which in many instances is proving extremely wise. All efforts to make the churches more efficient should be determined by local conditions, each situation being met by as much wisdom as can be pooled by the community. It will be found that perplexing situations and questions have already straightened out on simple lines comparatively easy to follow. Two or more struggling churches of denominations differing only slightly in theology, as the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist, can very properly be encouraged to come together in the small communities. The worst conditions prevail, and an inferior character of church life exists, where churches of this stamp doggedly persist in preserving their individual existence, and when it is clear to everyone that federation or some other form of church union would bring them into a position to push a good constructive work in the community. These denominations attract the same type of people, they use the same songs, their form of worship is similar, and there is no good reason why they should keep apart. Obviously, if the churches are self-supporting, and the community warrants it, there can be no gain in disturbing them.

If, however, they are dependent upon financial aid from without, or are forced to a week-end supply or joining forces with an adjacent village, then the people should be encouraged to take steps towards some sort of union

which can be placed upon a self-supporting basis. Federation is recommended because it causes the least friction and calls for a minimum of sacrifice, as it keeps the denominational fellowship intact. Such an arrangement never fails to meet the approval of common sense. Similarly the Universalist and Unitarian churches, alike in many respects, ministering as a general thing to the same type of people, will not find it difficult to come together when conditions warrant it. If these natural and easy combinations could be brought about they would clear the field of a large number of unnecessary church organizations. The only distressing result that may occur to one, is the chagrin on the part of some perhaps that their denominations have lost a church or two. In all fairness, however, we believe that there is a growing sense in our denominational leaders that the religious gains to a community are of vaster importance than the size of any particular denomination.

We now come to an entirely different situation, but even here there is a natural way to settle down to the real business of fostering spiritual growth. We refer to that of a Liberal and Evangelical church in a small community. If both can be honorably sustained it is a most happy arrangement. It is the growing judgment of some that two churches of widely different theological beliefs and traditions, ministering to different types of people, preaching different doctrines and looking at life from different angles, should be encouraged to press their individual work in the most energetic fashion. The thing that will save them trouble will be a willingness to unite on schemes for social benefit, and a fine regard and appreciation of each other's worth to the community in fostering the spiritual growth of the people. There can be no dissent from this arrangement provided the churches are supported by the community. Indeed there is plenty of evidence to show that a Liberal and Evangelical church in a community are more likely to reach and quicken the life of the people than churches of similar creeds and outlook. More and more it is becoming apparent in schools, politics and religion that people naturally fall into Liberal and Conservative groups. To have churches in a locality in which both tempers can find expression would seem on the face of it to be highly desirable.

Manifestly the question is changed if the two churches under consideration are not self-supporting and look to their denominations to keep them going. Outside aid is permissible for a time while young organizations are getting on their feet, but when a church drags along for half a century in this manner, then the feasibility of Federation or some other form of church union should be seriously considered. In that case each church will be obliged to sacrifice its distinctive character and transfer its loyalty to a compromise type.

In discussing natural possible lines for Federation we have tried to make plain that in all cases the determining factor was self-support. Churches that can finance their religious enterprises in a commendable manner should not be expected to give up their ground until a compelling spirit from their inmost center leads them to seek organized affiliation. We have made support the deciding factor because it is most indicative of the spirit of the people. Most, perhaps, of our present trouble comes from the fact that many churches are not the communities' own creation. No one is to blame for this, only the true attitude of the people should be appreciated. The history of many church organizations in rural districts plagued by a surplus of churches, reveals the fact that many were superinduced upon the community. In some cases they were organized by a band of denominationalists who propped them up for the first few years. The abandoned church so common in recent times shows that the community never looked upon such an organization as its own offspring, for whom it was bound to work and sweat. There will be many more abandonments unless the community arrives at the point where it can feel that its churches are its own; the finest outcome of its finest life. The adoption of the name Community House, Community Church, is a recognition of the truth that a religious institution, to be free and to become of lasting value, must come out of the very vitals of the people's life.

We should remind ourselves here that we are not left to manipulate trying situations in small rural communities. Theoretically, the straight natural ways would in short order bring more satisfactory conditions, but individual churches have deep roots and are not easily moved even when they see the gain in a certain line of action.

We are not forced to rely merely upon the trickling streams of moral and spiritual life to be found in our own localities. These streams would vanish if they were not the continuation of deeper and wider currents somewhere else. The impact of millions of right-minded men and women is surely bringing closer together and will in all certainty eventually merge the great denominations of similar theological views. The onward movement of the great bodies is a great compelling force which is our greatest warrant in the small centers for going ahead. Our backing and encouragement and reason is the direction the universal common life is taking, and much of our work is, after all, to strive to get into the same general course.

CHRISTIAN UNITY THROUGH FINDING THE FATHER

DOREMUS SCUDDER, M.D., EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
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The past fifty years have been good to live in religiously because they have seen such decisive advances. The world is totally different now from the sphere into which some of us were born. Fancy a professor of systematic theology to-day talking in terms of Dr. Shedd of the eighties, less than forty years ago! Dr. Shedd had such a thing as a systematic theology to offer; he could base it upon irrefutable proof texts. Who ever thinks of proof texts in this generation? Our proofs are not in the texts but in the soul whose experience proves the texts. Dr. Shedd dared tread the footsteps of Him whose ways are not our ways and essayed the heaven-high thoughts of the Eternal.

But our religion has come down from any such high and holy place to the level of the humble and contrite heart in which the Inhabiter of Eternity also dwells and to the paths in which the Father walks with His children.

In this revolutionary change three factors have been preeminent. First, a world-embracing passion. This grew out of the foreign missionary movement. Our first foreign missionary society, the American Board, dared the experiment of a Catholic Church for the heathen. But before the mission field was reached by the first recruits, the spirit of denominationalism broke loose, and it did not take many decades to equip the missionary movement with all the isms that the fertile American mind could devise. Our missionaries, however, yielding to the law that action begets its correlative emotion, fell in love with the people they went to save. A fair share of this high passion found its way home. Behold then the anomaly — Christians loving heathen whom they had never seen, while inheriting more or less animosity toward brethren of other communions, kind-hearted Christlike neighbors in whose lives they were forced to see a revelation of God's love.

It was no wonder that ere long such an outrage upon nature was ordered to walk the plank and slowly sank out of sight. The world of disciples began, unconsciously at first, then with full will, to yearn to get together, until to-day this longing for unity has become one of the mightiest motive forces in the life of organized Christianity. That it simply cannot be denied expression, the noble appeal of the Lambeth Bishops testifies with a grace of utterance and a disclosure of spiritual power which have thrilled the heart of Protestant Christendom as that heart has not been stirred for centuries.

The second of these factors which have so dynamically conditioned the progress of the Church Universal the past fifty years, has been a developing conviction. Political democracy, which asks and secures for each man the right both to think for himself and to act independently as a citizen, was bound to influence the church of Christ. It helped determine the growth of the conviction that a man has a divine right not only to live out his own religious life absolutely untrammeled within the visible Church of his Lord but also to formulate for himself his own theological point of view. Such a conviction irresistibly demands that its possessor recognize an equal right for every other soul and concede it. Under the pressure of this consciousness of a man's ownership of his own personality, authoritative creeds imposed from without became unthinkable. Hence many a devout spirit in the conservative communions began to find it conscientiously impossible to join with other disciples of Jesus in repeating a creed as a form of worship because of the unreality and therefore the untruth of a few score or a few hundreds or a thousand men saying to one another, "I believe exactly as you do, aye, even as the worthies of a millenium or more ago did." Faith in God, which from the angle of philosophical definition is the soul's determined grip upon the Eternal, which in the mind of science is the soul's resolve to live according to the theory that God is personal Father and Friend, and which experience finds to be the story of the soul's growing intimacy with the Great Comrade, differs in each of us from its manifestation in every other man. Hence creeds which are the great chapter headings in the history of man's religious emancipation have been learning to take their modest places in theological museums. The

Lambeth appeal shows that they have not yet fully made up their minds to surrend their mortmain, but that great renunciation is inevitably at hand. With this surrender the way is clear for Christian disciples to get together. For nothing has kept Christ's followers apart so much as authoritative formulations of intellectual beliefs. Liberty here means an open road to unity. Yet this great end will be reached not so much by way of logical progress from the conviction of the freedom of faith as through the common sharing of a supreme experience.

For if the last quarter century has been religiously remarkable for any one characteristic, it is because of its preeminent testimony to men's power to realize God. It is well sometimes to question what it is that definitively separates Jesus from every other religious teacher. A company of Christian disciples would undoubtedly give very different answers to this question. But place Jesus' first recorded remark, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's House?" at the head of the page, and at its foot his last word on the Cross, "Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit," then fill in all between with his wilderness replies to the tempter, with his prayers beginning, "Father," with such matchless exclamations as "I and the Father are one," "I do always the things which are pleasing to Him," "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me," "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and you have the portrait of a soul so completely surrendered to God from childhood that He became the very expression in human terms of the Great Spirit, God's incarnation if you prefer that phrasing. Jesus' personal realization of his Father—men may not agree in finding this the source and ground of his uniqueness, but it is certainly one secret of his personality.

Is it not also the very sum and substance of his message? He began his ministry with the declaration "God's reign is near." I use Dr. Moffat's significant translation of the Greek *Basileia*. Couple this with his word "God's reign—the sphere in which God exercises His sovereignty, in which He expresses His personality—is within you." Jesus' thesis was that what his Father was to him, He could and should be to every man. His own crowning religious experience being the absolute sufficiency of God, his one aim was to have his disciples

know this privilege in its fulness. Although none of the Gospels proceed upon any such idea, all, unconsciously and hence the more forcefully, bear testimony to it. This is strikingly true of John. For though he states that the object he had in writing his Gospel was to establish a very different proposition, he gives by far the most impressive picture of Jesus' purpose to lead his followers into the very sanctuary of his own religious life—unity with his Father.

While it is true that every age has had its mystics who practised the Presence of God in imitation of Jesus, this exercise remained largely an esoteric experience; it was for the few mystically inclined spirits. It was easier to satisfy the multitudes with saints or with the Mother of God or with Jesus rather than lead the ordinary man into the Holy of Holies, his own soul where the Father dwells. Yet at last the age of Democracy in religion was reached, the sacredest experiences were for all. Aye, within our own generation a Christian denomination, bearing all the earmarks of its crude origin, with the unerring instinct that so often characterizes unsophisticated minds has made the central idea of its propaganda the secret of Jesus—realization of the Father,—and because it has exalted this vital experience, notwithstanding all its banalities, it has given one of the most marked testimonies to the power of God that the religious world has shown in our age.

And this is not an isolated feature characteristic of Christian Science, New Thought, Bahai and a half dozen other cults, whose names sound strangely. Every denomination of the Christian Church holds an increasing number of disciples who, leaving dogma to the theologians, have surrendered themselves to the experiment of finding God within themselves and of imitating Jesus in making it their meat to do their Father's will. Through this doorway they enter into the brotherly life. For finding Father includes the discovery of brother. The simplicity and breadth of this experience pass all description. To follow Jesus to God and thereafter live with the Father is the greatest thing in human life. Because it transcends all statement, it renders theology unessential so far as theology lies outside of personal experience. It does not exalt theories or dogmas of the Person of Christ and hence it justifies our Lord's great declara-

tion, "No one knoweth who the Son of man is save the Father." It leaves to each man his own statement of credo.

Now this experiment with God is fundamentally unifying. Men who know the Father as the very life of their life and as a result are born into the world of brotherhood have passed into a realm where considerations like Nicene or Apostle's creed as faith's minimum, or baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments rather than as symbols, or episcopal ordination or non-ordination do not count. This experience, not being limited to the Christian church, embraces in the wider religious brotherhood men of all religions who hear and obey the still small voice. If we ever have organic union in the Christian Church, the universality of this culminating experience of God as personal Father and Companion will certainly furnish an appropriate ground therefor. It is significant that as this experience deepens in the individual soul and as a constantly enlarging company of men share it, the obstacles to union are progressively disappearing. Some day we Christians, dwelling in the Father and He in us, will awaken to find ourselves one. That will be the most blessed moment in all human history.

In anticipation of this glad day let us each practise the consciousness of unity with all men; let us also federate our church activities wherever possible, learn together to conduct great campaigns for community and national and world betterment in the sunny faith that our ecclesiastical machinery must some day inevitably reflect the spirit of oneness which animates it.

What a wonderful incentive, then, to evangelism! that is, to the task of getting into every man's personal experience the Good News of Immanuel, God with us, God with and in every man, his Personal Father and Friend, just as He was in Jesus. Men are children of God; let them live out this the supreme reality of which a spiritual being is capable! How? Jesus did it and showed us how by being brotherly while from childhood he cultivated intimacy with His Father. There was a time in His boyhood when He awakened to the consciousness of God's actually being His Father. Thereafter He lived out in thought and act that consciousness. Our age is ripe for this experiment with the Great Spirit of the

universe, for the preaching of it and better still for the converting witness of every personality that lives it.

"Now faith is assurance of things hoped for,
A testing of things not seen."
A venture with God.

In announcing the closing speaker the presiding officer alluded to the traditional difference between Universalists and Unitarians, it having been said that "Universalists believe that God is too good to damn them, and Unitarians believe they are too good to be damned." The slight differences in theology, Mr. Burt said, had never seemed to him sufficient to justify keeping up two separate denominations. "I attended the International Congresses of 1910 and 1913, at Berlin and Paris," he continued, "where we were fortunate in having with us, besides many prominent Unitarians, such Universalists as Rev. Dr. Bisbee, editor of the *Universalist Leader;* Rev. Dr. Lee S. McCollester of the Theological School of Tufts College; Rev. Dr. Marion D. Shutter of Minneapolis; our dear friend Rev. J. Harry Holden, whose recent death is so deeply mourned, and Dr. Perkins, our next speaker; and I came home with the definite conviction that both denominations were suffering a great loss through not having the constant intercourse and interchange of services with their brethren who, though with them in faith, were separated by an artificial sectarian line. It may be that the traditions of a hundred years are too strong to allow the two bodies to unite, but at least there ought to be the most complete reciprocity of fellowship and membership. I now take pleasure in introducing as our last speaker Rev. Frederic W. Perkins, D. D., of the First Universalist Parish of Lynn."

INTERDENOMINATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Rev. Frederic W. Perkins, D.D., Pastor First Universalist Parish, Lynn, Mass.

Interdenominational fellowship must rest on something more substantial than a fibreless tolerance and an uncontentious good-nature. It must be rooted and grounded in a common unifying faith and a compelling common purpose. Fellowship is the organization of a creative faith and a gripping purpose. It is not manufactured; it grows by its own inevitableness. Interdenominational fellowship must have an object of loyalty more thrilling, more inciting to sacrificial devotion, than the lesser sectarian loyalties to which we naturally yield. Not until the kingdom of God becomes a consummation we really care for above all zeal for partisan glory or denominational aggrandizement will interdenominational fellowship be felt to be a necessity; and until it seems a necessity it will be nothing more than a polite gesture, like the "distinguished consideration" which jealous diplomats accord each other in official notes. The larger fellowship does not grow from silence concerning the creeds that separate, but from affirmation, in word and deed, of the faith that unites.

A faith is larger than a creed and, if it is vital and creative, cannot be compressed within any creedal formulation. Your faith is what you believe with your heart; your creed is what you believe with your head. Both are necessary, but they are different. The essence of creed is intellectual assent; the essence of faith is trust and moral allegiance. The creedal ideal is accuracy of thought; the ideal of faith is the faithful life, loyalty to the true and the right as the life of God in the soul of man. Some sort of creed is indeed a necessity to any man who thinks, but the necessity is of the second order.

Right there is the mistake of "orthodoxy" of every sort. Orthodoxy is not a set of ideas; it is any set of ideas held as a finality. It is a spiritual disease that may infect self-styled "liberal" ideas as truly as those denominated "conservative," and is never so unlovely and unwholesome as when it takes that shape. The conceit

of orthodoxy is that there is a complete, final, authoritative creedal form that faith must take, that the all-important thing is to find it and then test one's faith and loyalty by the degree of one's conformity to it. The phrase, "the faith once delivered to the saints," is construed to mean the creed once delivered to the theologians. It is a fatal delusion. There is no such creed, and any that presumes to be such, or that is held in such a spirit, whether it be of Athanasius or Nicea or Westminster, or the Winchester Profession or the Boston Declaration, is a house of bondage which a Christian freeman has forfeited his birthright to enter.

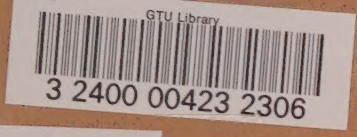
From this it follows that any man who appreciates and claims his heritage as a Christian freeman uses a creed as a cry to rally believers rather than to expel heretics. That is a vital distinction. Is the church a citadel of faith to be defended or an army of the faithful to be led? In the latter case the creed is not a password but a battle-hymn, and its power and value are not in the words of the song so much as in the uniting spirit that it sings.

We waste our time in erecting creedal barriers against our foes. They are not likely to importune us to enter. Rather must we send our cry to the hearts of our friends, wherever they may be, inside our church or without, confident that any Christian of the free mind and loving spirit can understand a fellow-freeman when he speaks. We may differently conceive of our common Master. We may believe in the final victory of the kingdom of God with varying degrees of assurance, from trembling hope to robust, bouyant certitude. But if to our faith God is Love, whom we know only as we love; if humanity is a brotherhood in which he is chief who serves most; if the only unfaith is distrust of the power of right and the only heresy is exploiting the weakness of men; if the kingdom of God is sure because the unconquerable God is behind it, and the cause of Christ means victory, not a forlorn hope—then our spirit can understand any man who holds that faith whatever his lips may say. All of us can march under any creedal banner any of us may raise.

"Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." Only a church of the free spirit can be vitally a part of the church of tomorrow. This is a world of many spiri-

tual tongues by which men may variously utter a common vision and passion and purpose. A free church cannot limit its sympathy or fellowship to the speakers of a single provincial dialect, even thought it be trying to say the greatest truth in the spiritual horizon. Other men in other lands, in other churches or homeless aliens from any church, are saying it in their way, and living it with a fidelity that may put ours to shame. It is from faithful life to faithful life that the electric spark of Christ's fellowship passes and transmutes the dialects that differ into the understanding that is one. The marvel of Pentecost was not simply the mighty inrushing of the Spirit but the power of that fiery visitation to impart to Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia the power each to hear the other speaking in his own tongue the wonderful works of God.

So must it be in the Pentecost for which we pray. We must have the instinct that recognizes our own kindred in faith wherever they may be. The essence of that faith is confidence that righteousness and love are the unconquerable will of the unconquerable God, that human souls are the ultimate values in the Father's universe, that the kingdom of God is that which earthly societies must become or perish. That faith, recognized or unrecognized, named or nameless, is the living fire in the hearts of the makers of a new world. The vindication of that faith, more convincing than any argument for any formal creed, is the patent fact that whenever and wherever men struggle valiantly for right against wrong, "perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed," you will find them upborne and controlled by the faith that thrills in the Apostle's ringing cry: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" All men everywhere who cherish that faith, however they may formulate it, can recognize each other on sight, for they have the witness of the Spirit that they are one.



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